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# Historical Society moving into 1807 Winsor house

By John Chaffee  
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DUXBURY — The Rural and Historical Society, which has been in the vanguard of Duxbury's conservation and preservation efforts since 1883, will move into new quarters next year.

From the two-story 1826 Drew House at the Bluefish River flagpole, the society will move a half-mile down Washington Street to Snug Harbor. It will move its office and library into the stately federal house at the southeast corner of Mattakeesett Court and Washington Street.

Commonly known in recent years as the Leonard House, the three-story, yellow-brick house with green shutters was built in 1807 by Nathaniel Winsor Jr., who was involved in shipbuilding, at the time the town's major industry.

The society intends to restore its original name and have the house open to the public.

"We have a more active membership now, and we've really been feeling the pinch here at Drew House," said Marcia Solberg, who became the society's executive director a year ago.

"We were looking for more space and we hated to see that historic house sitting there decaying," she said.

The house, which was purchased by Dr. Edwin Leonard in 1949, has been for sale for the past four years, Solberg said.

"At one time, the asking price was more than \$1 million, but we will pay \$680,000 to become the owners on Dec. 31," she said.

The purchase became possible after a longtime member who had been urging the society to buy the property made a substantial contribution and got some of her friends to do the same, Solberg said.

"We need \$1.2 million to buy the house, restore it and endow it," she said. The society already has raised \$400,000, she said.

According to "Stopping Places Along Duxbury Roads," a society publication, the house has fine craftsmanship inside and out. It includes a two-story spiral staircase said to be modeled after a Bulfinch design.

At the turn of the century, it was known as the Franklin House and was open to paying guests. Later, it was renamed the Colonial Inn.

In its nearly 115 years, the society has acquired a lot of property in Duxbury, from historic houses to acres of woodland.

The buildings include the King Caesar House on Powder Point, which is depicted in the December issue of Colonial Homes magazine. The woodlands include Lapham Woods, across from the First Parish Church and town hall.

Together with the new Duxbury Bay Maritime School, part of which will abut the one-acre Winsor House site, the character of the Snug Harbor area will change dramatically when the society moves into its new home, Solberg said.

Immediately behind the Winsor House are a public parking lot, the town pier and the harbormaster's office.

"We have this image of summer visitors to Duxbury walking through the area and dropping in on the historical society," Solberg said.

How the Winsor House will be restored and what the society will do with the Drew House will depend on a master plan that's currently being developed, she said.

"We should know by the end of the year," Solberg said.

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Rosemary Lincoln/The Patriot Ledger  
Marcia Solberg, executive director of the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society, stands in front of the Winsor house. The house, built in 1807, is the future home of the historical society.